

Federal Highway Administration

Rural Transportation Planning Workshops

California Workshop

Including

Nevada

Oregon

Washington

FINAL DRAFT

Summer 1999

Dye Management Group, Inc.

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Road mileage data included in this report is from the Federal Highway Administration, 1996, and can be accessed at www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/1996/section5.html.

Federal Highway Administration

Rural Transportation Planning Workshops

California Workshop



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Objectives.....	1
1.2	Discussion Topics	2
1.3	Participants	3
1.4	Report Structure	4
2.0	California	5
3.0	Nevada	10
4.0	Oregon.....	14
5.0	Washington	18
6.0	Workshop Findings and Conclusions.....	24
6.1	Similarities	24
6.2	Differences	24

Attachment A: Participants

Attachment B: Maps

Federal Highway Administration

Rural Transportation Planning Workshops

California Workshop

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1.0 Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), assisted by Dye Management Group, Inc., conducted a series of regional rural transportation planning workshops from October 1998 through July 1999. The California Department of Transportation hosted the fifth regional workshop on April 14-15, in Sacramento.

These workshops were structured to allow the exchange of success stories and dialogue between neighboring states and their representatives on how to make rural transportation planning effective. In addition, the workshops were used to assemble information on how local elected officials are involved in the statewide transportation planning process. Officials from California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington, including planning representatives, district/county engineers, local elected officials, rural planning organizations, economic development agencies, tribal governments, departments of transportation, and rural transit operators were invited to attend. The information gathered at the California workshop is presented for each state individually. Overall workshop findings and conclusions follow the state summaries.

1.1 Objectives

The purpose of the workshops was to foster dialogue and the exchange of ideas, not formal presentations. The objectives of the workshops were to:

- Explore and promote effective ways to involve rural officials in the statewide transportation planning process.
- Enable participants to share experiences in rural transportation planning and programming.
- Build relationships among participants that can form the basis for future cooperation and coordination.
- Identify the most effective roles and responsibilities for rural transportation providers and users.

- Determine rural transportation needs and issues that are being addressed by planning and programming.
- Identify best practice planning techniques used in developing successful rural projects.
- Obtain information for a report to Congress on how responsive state transportation plans and the statewide transportation planning process are to rural concerns and how rural officials are involved in the planning process.

These objectives were achieved by working through an agenda of discussion topics. Workshop participants were asked to come prepared to provide input around specific questions that they were given in advance.

1.2 Discussion Topics

Five principal discussion topics were addressed in the workshop. Knowledgeable individuals from each state, from both the state department of transportation perspective and the local rural perspective, were asked to address these discussion topics. The topics were:

- **The Process and the Outcome: How Planning for Rural Areas Is Conducted**

This topic covered the following questions:

- How is planning for rural areas conducted?
- How are rural transportation needs addressed in the development of the statewide transportation improvement program?
- How are rural officials involved in decision making?
- What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses in your state?

- **Jurisdictional Roles, Responsibilities, and Funding**

This topic covered the following questions:

- What are the jurisdictional roles and responsibilities in your state for planning, programming, and funding improvements in rural areas?
- How are plan decisions funded?

- **Integration/Coordination with Other Plans**

This topic covered the following questions:

- How are local/regional plans coordinated with other plans?

- How are local rural goals balanced against regional/statewide goals and objectives?

- **Success Stories**

This topic covered the following question:

- What success stories do you have of innovative programs and projects that address rural needs?

- **Other Issues**

This topic covered the following question:

- What are the major rural transportation issues facing rural areas in your state, for all modes?

1.3 Participants

State departments of transportation were solicited to host the rural transportation planning workshops. Based upon the response, host states were identified and nearby states were then invited to attend.

Knowledgeable individuals, from both the state department of transportation perspective and the local rural perspective, were invited to attend the workshops. The objective was to have approximately five people from each state, representing a variety of rural transportation stakeholders, actively participate in the workshop forum. Participants included local, state, and federal planning representatives; county engineers and commissioners; local elected officials; councils of governments; regional planning organizations; economic development agencies; tribal governments; and rural transit operators. National organizations represented at the workshops included the:

- Community Transportation Association of America.
- Federal Highway Administration.
- Federal Transit Administration.
- National Association of Counties.
- National Association of County Engineers.
- National Association of Development Organizations.

The local elected officials who participated in the workshops included rural mayors, county commissioners, judges/county executives, public works directors, trustees, and former state legislators.

1.4 Report Structure

The format of this report is based on the workshop objectives and topic areas, as follows:

- The Rural Planning Process.
- Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions.
- Major Planning Issues.
- Identified Strengths and Weaknesses.
- Success Stories.

Each of the participating states are addressed in turn. A list of workshop participants and maps of each of the states are included in the attachments.

2.0 California

California contains 381,417 lane miles of roads, 181,742 lane miles of which are rural, and 15,802 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Sixty-three percent of rural roads are locally owned. California's rural transportation planning process is considered to be bottom-up.

2.1 The Rural Planning Process

California has 43 regional transportation planning agencies comprised of county and city representatives and a governing body. Most regional planning agencies represent only one of California's 58 counties, but some represent two or more. Counties receive transportation funding from the state, and the regional planning agencies are authorized to do multimodal regional planning and prioritize projects. The regional plans then formulate part of the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP) and California Transportation Plan.

Regional transportation planning agencies receive a nominal amount of funding for planning purposes and have no direct staff support. In several rural counties, planning consists of classifying their roads as minor or local, and then budgeting their safety and maintenance money; they have no capital projects.

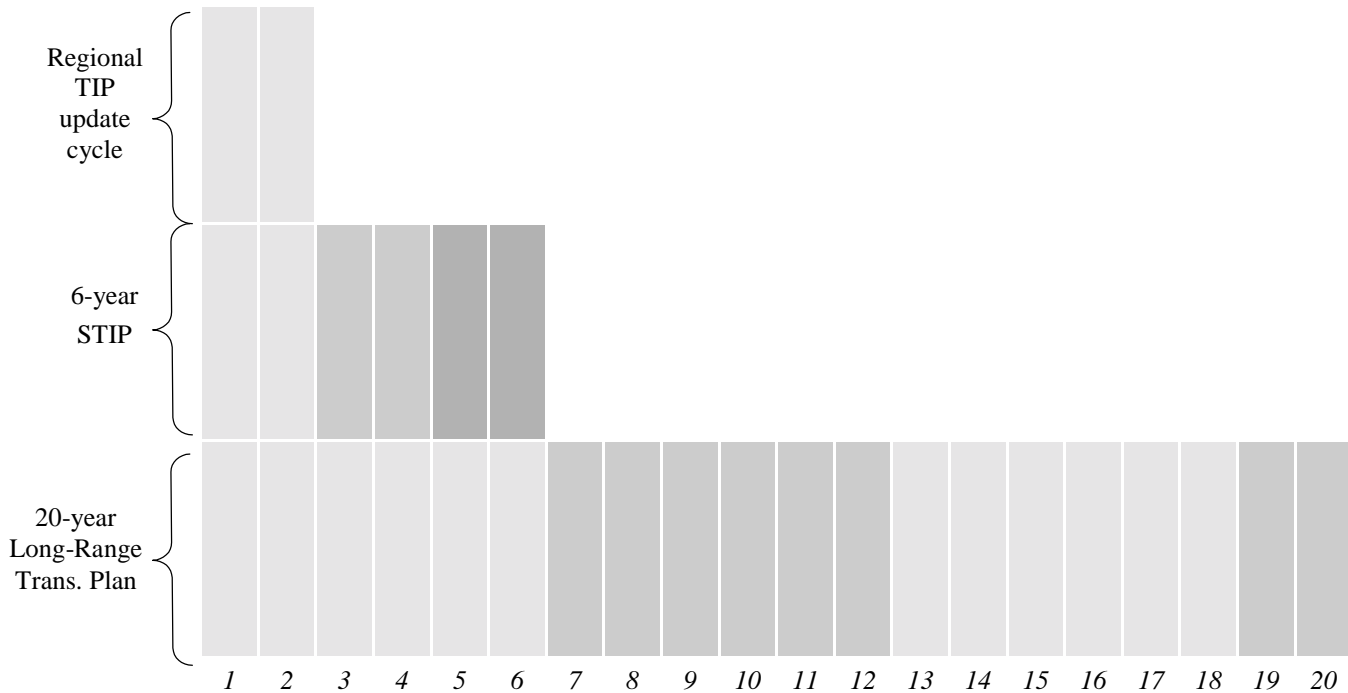
The California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) has 12 districts that work with and coordinate between the regional transportation planning agencies, counties, and cities. The district offices also plan for the interregional road system. Some rural areas are included in metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) as well. CalTrans is overseen by a transportation commission.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- Regional transportation planning agencies hold meetings to gather input on transportation needs and develop their regional plan. Some planning agencies have a two-tier process for high and low priority projects.
- Every two years the regional transportation planning agencies submit their updated regional multimodal plans to the transportation commission and CalTrans for approval.
- The transportation commission approves or rejects the regional transportation plan in its entirety. If accepted, the regional plan advances to the STIP.
- The project-based STIP becomes part of the policy-based, long-range California Transportation Plan.

Exhibit 2a illustrates California's transportation planning process.

Exhibit 2a: Rural Planning Integration in California



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials are encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process by joining their regional transportation planning agency and attending public meetings. In some counties, local elected officials have final approval over regional transportation plans and project prioritization.

2.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

Federal funds and state transportation revenues are all combined into a single pot of money. CalTrans sets aside an amount of money from this pot for statewide preservation purposes, then divides the remaining funds between the state and regional transportation planning agencies as follows:

- One-quarter (25%) of post-preservation funding goes to CalTrans for the interregional movement of people and goods. Of this portion, 15% is to be used in rural areas and 10% can be used anywhere in the state.
- Three-quarters (75%) of post-preservation funding goes to the regional planning agencies by an earmark. The earmark is a minimum given to each county based on a

formula of 75% population and 25% road miles. This funding does not have to be used on roads that meet the standards of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). One-quarter of 1% of the gas tax that is returned to the counties must be used for transit. Counties may apply for Section 5311 funds or establish a sales tax for transit.

However, the amount of money the state and regional agencies will receive each year under the 25%-75% split will decrease. The transportation commission has indicated that as time progresses, the amount of funding for capacity additions will decrease as the cost of maintenance and preservation increases.

Preservation funding is allocated to counties based on the pavement management system and safety criteria.

2.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Rural counties' needs can't compete against those of urban counties, and the rural perspective often isn't heard.

To ensure that rural counties had a strong voice in planning, a rural county coalition was formed which has the support of CalTrans.

- There are no performance measures for consistency among the regional planning agencies in evaluating needs and deficiencies.

CalTrans has been struggling for three years with a statewide standard for performance for state highways and other major facilities across modes. Some performance measures were completed last year, which provided an initiative to begin a consistent process. The details have yet to be finalized, as what works for a rural region doesn't apply to an urban area. AASHTO standards are currently being used as a guideline in determining deficiencies.

- Recent rulings by the Environmental Protection Agency have made air quality a major concern for rural areas.

Due to the terrain, some rural regions are faced with air quality issues. Compounding the problem are constantly changing environmental standards and special interest groups that petition to stop projects, consequently cutting off federal funding.

- Regionalism doesn't occur unless legislatively mandated.

Due to increasing congestion, the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System was created by the state. However, the counties pulled out when disagreements arose over bussing, local control, and which roads would be used.

2.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- To open up a line of communication, CalTrans created the Native American Advisory Committee, with tribal officials and citizens representing over 105 tribes. It has been meeting with CalTrans quarterly for over a year, and has a permanent staff position.
- The California Association of Coordinated Transportation conducts workshops and provides scholarships for transportation stakeholders to attend other workshops.
- Though sometimes difficult to approve, many rural counties are implementing development impact and construction fees to generate transportation revenue.
- County planning is progressing from rubberstamping CalTrans' plans to asking for certain projects to participatory in-depth planning.
- The Transportation Development Act allocated one-quarter of 1% of the gas tax to be used for public transit purposes.
- Due to the FHWA's economic incentive program and California's large tourism base, many recreational projects receive funding that otherwise would not.

Weaknesses

- The majority of county road systems are not eligible for STIP funding, and the roads that are must compete against state highways.
- Some counties feel that deficiency and needs standards are manipulated to allow certain projects, and that CalTrans is "tinkering" with the standards and avoiding real issues.
- There is no consideration for preservation at the regional planning level.
- The construction cost index is increasing faster than revenue.
- Counties along the northern border are unable to pass a sales tax for transportation revenue, as Oregon has no sales tax and residents would shop there instead.
- Funding for rural areas is primarily based on population and is insufficient. "Return to the source" federal gas tax revenue for the rural system only nets 10 to 20 cents for every dollar, and there is \$4 billion in unmet needs on the county road and bridge systems. Many counties are reverting roads back to gravel and aren't accepting neighborhood streets for maintenance.

- Due to a population loophole that hasn't been adjusted by the legislature, many counties do not use their Transportation Development Act funding for transit.
- Intelligent transportation systems (ITS) plans are often not integrated into transportation plans. Roads may already have pavement sensors, but the information is sent to a data center and not to a roadside message board.

2.5 Success Stories

U.S. 97 in Siskiyou County is an example of a project that united governments and organizations in two states, which compromised on funding to meet rural needs.

3.0 Nevada

Nevada contains 93,623 lane miles of roads, 80,755 lane miles of which are rural, and 5,008 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Fifty-six percent of roads are locally owned. Nevada's rural transportation planning process is considered to be top-down.

3.1 The Rural Planning Process

Nevada has two development districts, a regional planning agency, and a bi-state planning commission that cover parts of the state, none of which have formal transportation planning responsibilities or roles. Instead, the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) handles all planning and conducts county needs assessments. Projects are identified at the county level by NDOT staff and, if approved, move up to the STIP. Local needs are generally maintenance issues and handled by the county or, in some areas, a regional transportation commission. NDOT plans for small cities on an as-needed basis, as usually the county plans are comprehensive and include municipalities. Planning is sometimes contracted out to consultants.

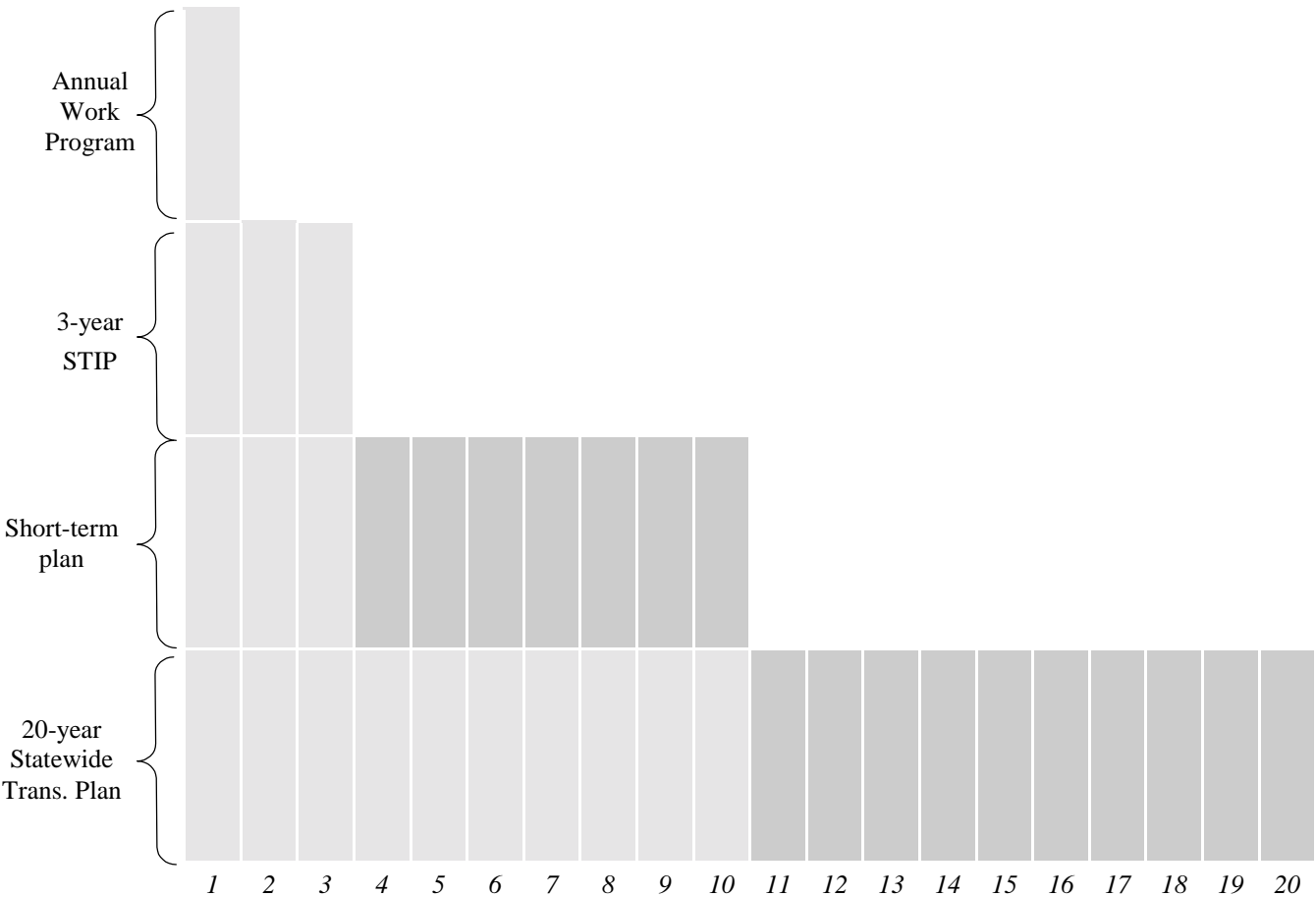
NDOT recently began coordinating public transportation services in rural areas and divided the state into six distinct transit regions. NDOT coordinates closely with the state's 24 Native American reservations and assists them with planning, especially for transit, although the Bureau of Indian Affairs conducts the actual reservation roads planning.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- Local elected officials and citizens can approach the statewide transportation technical advisory committee, which reports to the transportation board, with input and suggestions.
- The statewide technical advisory committee meets at least four times a year to discuss transportation issues and needs.
- Every year, NDOT staff planners go to each county to identify projects for inclusion in the STIP.
- NDOT develops a fiscally-constrained Annual Work Program as the first year of the STIP. The STIP then becomes part of the 10-year and long-range plans.

Exhibit 3a illustrates Nevada's transportation planning process.

Exhibit 3a: Rural Planning Integration in Nevada



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials may participate in the rural transportation planning process by providing input on needs and projects to NDOT, the statewide technical advisory committee, and the transportation board. They may also help to speed up a low priority project by searching for additional sources of funding.

3.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

Gas and some property taxes are allocated back to the counties for maintenance based on a formula of population, lane miles, and other factors. NDOT administers other funds on a project-by-project basis.

Nevada receives a minimal amount of federal transit funding. Federal public transit funds are distributed based on a set-aside and population; state public transit funds are distributed based on road miles after the cities receive 20%.

3.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Multiple transit operators often cover the same region, but do not provide services to everyone needing them.

NDOT is developing a statewide transit plan to coordinate transit services into centralized systems, thereby using resources more efficiently while serving a greater number of people. Currently, different agencies may inefficiently provide rides to seniors, tribal members, or the disabled in separate vehicles and trips. NDOT is also working with other state agencies to consolidate and enhance services.

- Nevada has a large elderly population, many of whom have lived in rural areas since birth and do not want to relocate to an urban area or care facility.

NDOT's efforts to coordinate public transportation include services for the elderly and hospitals. Often times a local doctor or dentist does not accept Medicaid – if the town has medical services at all – requiring an older person to travel at length to another town. Improved transit services will assist the elderly with these needs. Similarly, many tribal members do not want to leave reservations for cultural reasons.

- Towns are far apart, and a project may be located 200 miles from the county seat.

There is significant inter-county cooperation, and NDOT does not take boundaries into consideration when working on projects.

3.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- Governments and organizations work well together across county and state lines. Typically the lead agency is the one with the most funds.
- The attitude of, “if you can't get there by car, you don't go,” is changing in Nevada.
- Citizens and local elected officials have direct access to NDOT staff and the statewide technical advisory committee to provide input.

Weaknesses

- Some programs aren't very applicable. Nevada has a difficult time spending all its bridge and railroad crossing money because it has few of these projects.

- Nevada has a boom-and-bust economy. Many communities may grow and prosper with mining or a federal project like the Stealth bomber, and require transportation and utilities infrastructure, only to become ghost towns a couple of years later.
- Public involvement activities are only conducted to identify needs and projects; there is no opportunity for input after NDOT selects projects and assembles the STIP.

3.5 Success Stories

The Lake Tahoe region is an example of a cooperative bi-state planning endeavor, and is one of a few national transportation districts. It involves two states, their directors of transportation, at least eight counties, and ten cities.

4.0 Oregon

Oregon contains 169,955 lane miles of roads, 148,096 lane miles of which are rural, and 8,381 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Forty-five percent of rural roads are locally owned. Oregon's rural transportation planning process is considered to be a blend of top-down and bottom-up methods.

4.1 The Rural Planning Process

Oregon is currently conducting a pilot project in regional planning, which consists of three area commissions on transportation. The commissions are comprised of local transportation representatives, local elected officials, and business leaders. Their duties are to comment on policy set by the Oregon Transportation Commission, propose programs and projects, provide a link for citizens with transportation concerns, and improve the communication and interaction between the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and local governments, businesses, and the public. The area commissions report to the Oregon Transportation Commission either directly or through an ODOT regional manager. The Oregon Transportation Commission, which has five members, oversees ODOT.

Oregon also has several councils of governments, some of which also serve as area commissions on transportation. There is no law requiring the use or establishment of regional planning organizations, but ODOT contracts with councils of governments occasionally to do planning. Citizen advisory committees also identify transportation needs and provide project input to ODOT.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

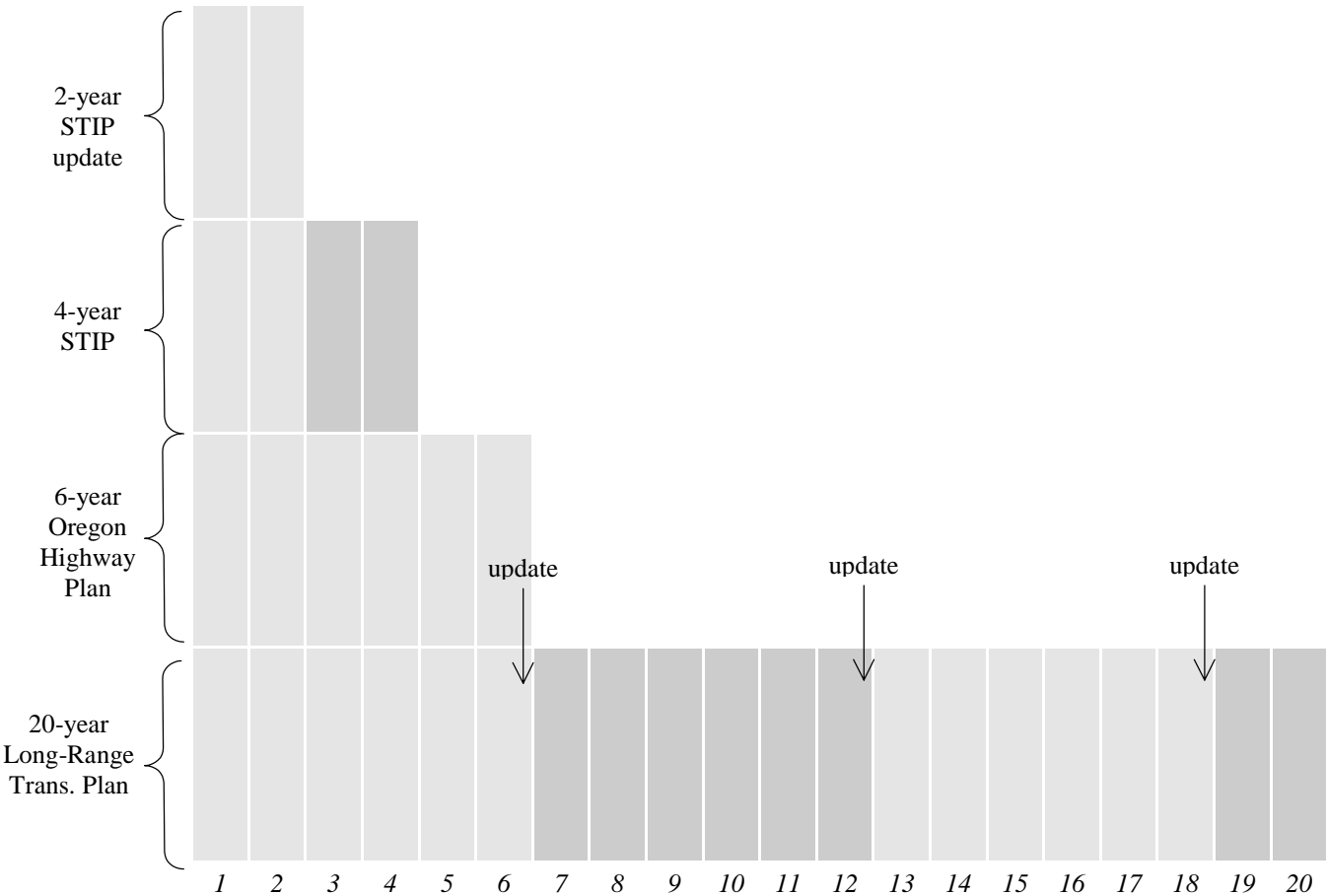
- All counties and cities must develop comprehensive and transportation system plans, which are periodically reviewed by ODOT. However, ODOT doesn't have the authority to enforce this planning. At the state level, corridor plans are prevalent.
- Area commissions on transportation, councils of governments, and citizen advisory committees meet to discuss transportation needs and issues.
- ODOT meets regularly with its district staff and area commissions on transportation to discuss transportation issues. Councils of governments representatives may also attend these meetings.
- Regions with area commissions on transportation must approve and submit a regional transportation improvement program (TIP) to ODOT.
- Every two years, ODOT staff planners update the STIP based on the area commissions' plans and input received from regions without area commissions. Three

lists formulate the STIP: pre-funded projects, strategic projects, and unfunded projects. The STIP then becomes part of the six-year, corridor-based Oregon Highway Plan.

- ODOT updates the policy-based long-range plan every six years.

Exhibit 4a illustrates Oregon’s transportation planning process.

Exhibit 4a: Rural Planning Integration in Oregon



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials are encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process through their area commission on transportation and council of governments. In regions without such organizations, officials may provide direct input to ODOT.

4.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

By statute, gas tax revenue can only be used on roads. At least half of gas tax funds go to the state with the remainder split between cities (based on population) and counties (based on the number of cars registered).

To supplement their transportation funding, counties can have new development fees or local gas taxes.

4.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Citizens were displeased with project selection, which was often political and not needs-based.

ODOT has recently reengineered the project selection process and created solution teams, which consist of stakeholders and technical people, to develop solutions to identified problems, especially on the highway system. The teams resolve problems early in the development process. Citizen advisory committees – comprised mostly of people who are directly impacted by a project – provide input to the solutions teams.

- The counties and ODOT often purchase and keep the same sets of equipment in the same regions to maintain roads.

In order to avoid this duplication of equipment and staff resources, some ODOT districts and counties are forming partnerships for maintenance responsibilities.

4.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- There is a new emphasis on access management, and ODOT is working to formalize its policies.
- A new provision in the Oregon Highway Plan states that if it makes more sense to increase capacity on a local highway in order to relieve congestion on the state highway, ODOT will provide funds to the local highway to solve this capacity problem.
- Before the area commissions on transportation were established, the communities that yelled the loudest or had the best connections received the most projects. There is now more consensus and cost-effective decisions.

Weaknesses

- Planning is not consistent at the regional level, and the success of the area commissions on transportation is under debate.
- Counties are often frustrated by the slow and “very laborious” planning process and their inability to even “just move dirt.”
- Corridor plans are multimodal, but do not integrate with other highways or plans.
- Transit modeling, such as for light rail, was designed for cities of 100,000 or more and not small communities.

4.5 Success Stories

The Jackson-Josephine Transportation Committee is an example of cooperation and consensus between numerous local agencies in order to make specific state highway improvement recommendations to the area commission on transportation and ODOT.

5.0 Washington

Washington contains 164,128 lane miles of roads, 125,655 lane miles of which are rural, and 6,950 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Sixty-one percent of rural roads are locally owned. Washington's rural transportation planning process is considered to be bottom-up.

5.1 The Rural Planning Process

Washington has 14 regional transportation planning organizations, which were established in 1990 under the Growth Management Act. Each planning organization has a policy board consisting of local elected officials, administrators, business representatives, and agricultural interests. Their primary functions are:

- To develop regional plans and policies for transportation, growth management, and environmental quality.
- To provide data and analysis to support local and regional decision making.
- To build community consensus on regional issues through information and citizen involvement.
- To build intergovernmental consensus on regional plans, policies, and issues.
- To advocate local implementation.
- To provide planning and technical services on a contractual basis.

Each regional transportation planning organization receives approximately \$36,000 per county annually from the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Staff support for the planning organizations is typically provided by the county, regional WSDOT district office, or other established regional organization.

In addition, the County Road Administration Board manages the county road inventory and has five planning regions, which are distinct from WSDOT's six regions. Its mission is to preserve and enhance the transportation infrastructure of Washington counties by providing standards of good practice, fair administration of funding programs, visionary leadership, and integrated progressive and professional technical services. The County Road Administration Board is overseen by a board of six county commissioners and three county engineers, and distributes the state gas tax back to the counties.

There is also a Transportation Improvement Board, comprised of 21 representatives: six city, six county, two WSDOT, six modal, and one from the governor's office. Its primary purpose is to administer state funding for local government transportation projects. Projects are funded by utilizing state revenue in combination with local matching funds

and private sector contributions. The Transportation Improvement Board also reviews requests from cities, counties, and the state for route jurisdiction transfers and provides recommendations to the Legislative Transportation Committee.

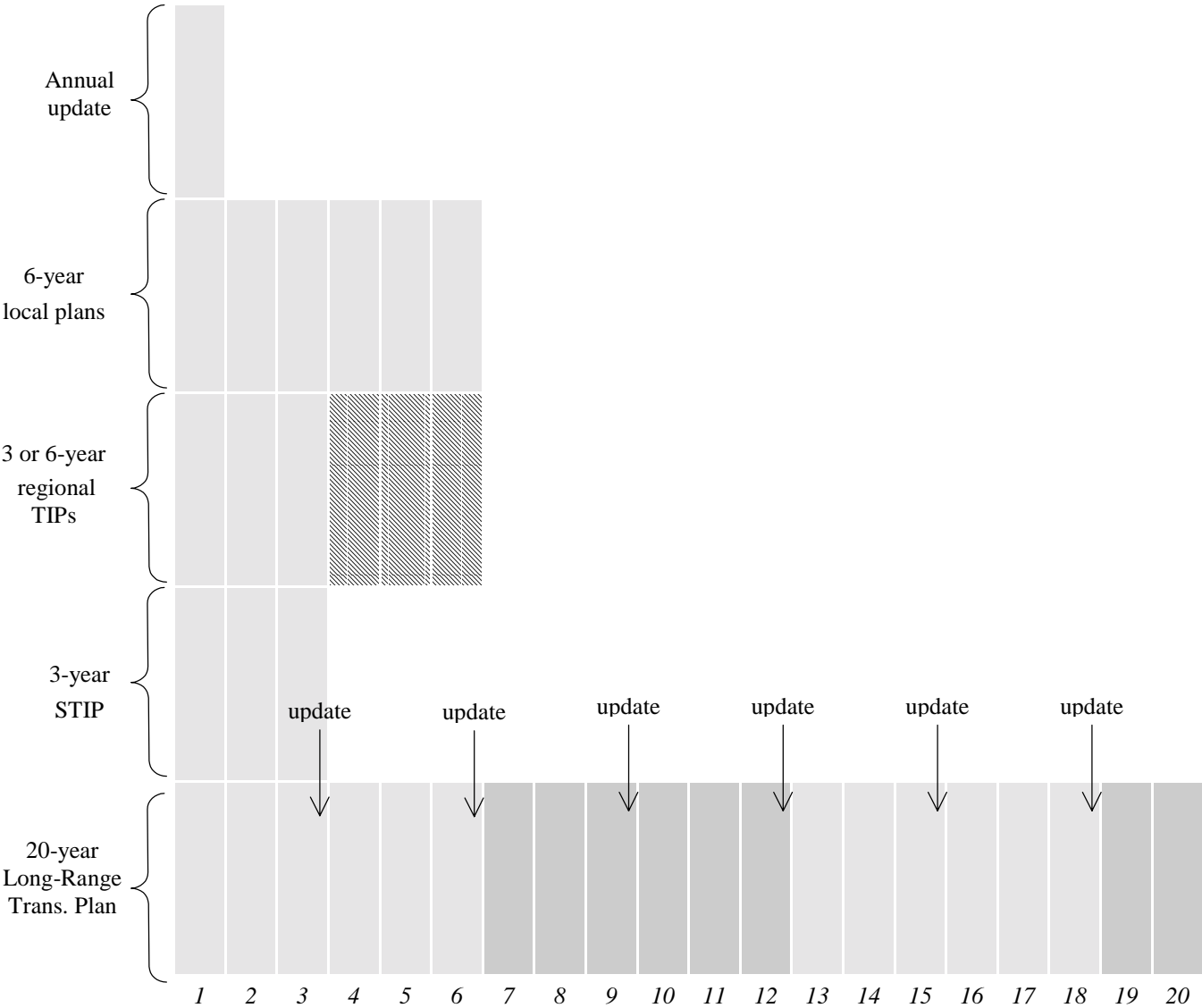
Principal Rural Planning Activities

- By state law, all cities and counties must have six-year TIPs. Local governments hold a public meeting each year for input and to update their six-year TIPs. The TIPs are then submitted to the regional transportation planning organization for inclusion in the regional TIP.
- The regional transportation planning organization assembles a prioritized list of federally funded and regionally significant projects from the local TIPs to create a regional TIP, which can be three or six years long. The regional TIP is given to WSDOT for inclusion in the STIP.
- WSDOT compiles the statewide three-year STIP from the regional TIPs and distributes it for public comment.
- Nine workshops have been held across the state by WSDOT to gather input on the statewide long-range transportation plan.
- The 20-year Washington Transportation Plan is published for public review and adopted by the transportation commission.

Exhibit 5a illustrates Washington's transportation planning process.

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Exhibit 5a: Rural Planning Integration in Washington



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials are encouraged to work in the development of their city and county plans, and to join the policy board of their regional transportation planning organization. Also, state legislators are encouraged to participate on the policy boards.

5.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

WSDOT is responsible for distributing funds from various federal programs to rural regions, and administers the state-funded Rural Mobility Grant through a multi-agency advisory committee.

Transportation funding is also distributed by two state agencies in Washington, the County Road Administration Board and the Transportation Improvement Board. The County Road Administration Board manages various grant programs in addition to distributing a portion of gas tax revenues back to the counties:

- The Rural Arterial Program (RAP) provides \$37 million per biennium for the reconstruction of rural arterials.
- The County Arterial Preservation Program (CAPP) provides \$26 million per biennium to assist counties in preserving their existing paved arterial network.
- The Pavement Management Program provides non-competitive grants to counties that maintain a pavement management inventory to certain standards. Similar non-competitive grants are available to counties that prioritize set levels of roads.

The Transportation Improvement Board administers several grant programs based on fuel tax and vehicle excise tax revenues:

- The Transportation Improvement Account (TIA) funds projects that are a result of economic growth and development.
- The Small City Account (SCA) is a general fund for cities with 5,000 or fewer people. Municipalities with 500 or fewer residents do not need to provide a match.
- The City Hardship Assistance Program (CHAP) provides funds to cities under 20,000 in population to assist with the transfer of highway ownership and maintenance.
- The Public Transportation Systems Account (PTSA) provides funding for the planning and development of public transportation systems. Small cities do not need to provide a match.
- The ISTEA Matching Funds Program provides municipalities with assistance in matching federal funds.
- Pedestrian Facility Program (PFP) funds projects that enhance pedestrian mobility.

The Department of Community Trade and Economic Development also distributes planning funds to cities and counties. Under the governor's new rural initiative, it will partner with WSDOT to distribute \$30 million for economic and transportation projects, such as industrial parks and recreational and tourism efforts.

5.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- The Growth Management Act's requirement for regional transportation planning organizations made some counties feel threatened.

Counties initially viewed the regional organizations as a means of diluting their authority. While this fear still persists to some degree, the counties are generally working in cooperation with smaller local governments and uniting to form a single voice in the legislature. However, counties still maintain the majority of the road systems, yet only has one vote in the regional planning organization, and therefore has a weakened ability to create change despite the same responsibilities. A weighted voting process would resolve this problem.

- After the passage of the Growth Management Act, some counties' plans were wish lists and not thorough and realistic TIPs.

Counties that didn't initially develop a complete, fiscally-constrained transportation plan will have to create a true financial picture during the update process. By law, the transportation plan must correlate to a financial plan now.

- There is difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled transportation planners.

Northeastern Washington has "circuit rider" planners who travel to, and work for, various organizations who cannot afford or find their own staff.

5.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- The regional transportation planning organizations provide a forum to make WSDOT aware of local issues and concerns, and enable regional cooperation. They also enable local governments to meet and discuss transportation issues non-combatively.
- State elected officials have less direct influence in project selection and funding; all projects must now go through the regional process, be included in a plan, and meet certain criteria.
- The legislature recently created a freight mobility strategic investment board to look at freight improvement projects and establish criteria for funding.

Weaknesses

- WSDOT is in a position of barely keeping up with preservation and maintenance, while falling behind on capital improvement projects.
- Each regional transportation planning organization has a different prioritization process for project selection, if they have one at all. Each planning organization also has a different method of combining local governments' TIPs into a regional TIP.
- Mobility projects are ranked statewide by cost-benefit ratio and traffic counts, putting rural areas at a disadvantage and creating tension.
- There is a lack of communication on transportation issues with tribes, who feel they are not integrated into the state transportation plan.

5.5 Success Stories

- The County Road Administration Board is an example of improving consistency in standards and planning by incentive, not regulation. They were also instrumental in placing computers in every county engineer's office and encourage the use of technology.
- The little-known U.S. Corps of Engineers' Planning Assistance Program provides funding and assistance, and enables projects like U.S. 12 to be completed faster using the Corps' in-house resources.

6.0 Workshop Findings and Conclusions

6.1 Similarities

Consensus was reached by the western workshop participants in many areas, most notably regarding public involvement, project development, and funding. These agreements are listed below.

- When provided the opportunity, citizens offer input on transportation planning issues.
- Rural planning organizations are an effective tool in educating the public on transportation and development issues.
- Rural planning organizations must compete with metropolitan areas for money, with the department of transportation acting as arbitrator and distributor of funds.
- Communities crave the benefits of economic development, yet strive to manage growth, land use, and congestion.
- Both organizations and the departments look forward to the increased use of ITS. However, there is a common misconception that ITS involves automated superhighways and has no real place in rural areas, when it can be as simple as a message sign.

6.2 Differences

Differences between the states were also noted, which tended to center on governmental organization, regulations, and the programming process. These differences are listed below:

- States vary from taking a top-down approach to rural planning – like Nevada and Oregon, which make final project decisions – to states that have a bottom-up approach, such as California and Washington.
- Some rural planning organizations struggle to find planning funds, while others are provided with more extensive resources.
- Some rural planning organizations have a purely advisory role, while others actively develop, plan, and program their transportation projects.
- There is wide variation in the extent to which the rural plans affect the prioritization and selection of projects.

Attachment A. Participants

California Workshop

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FINAL DRAFT

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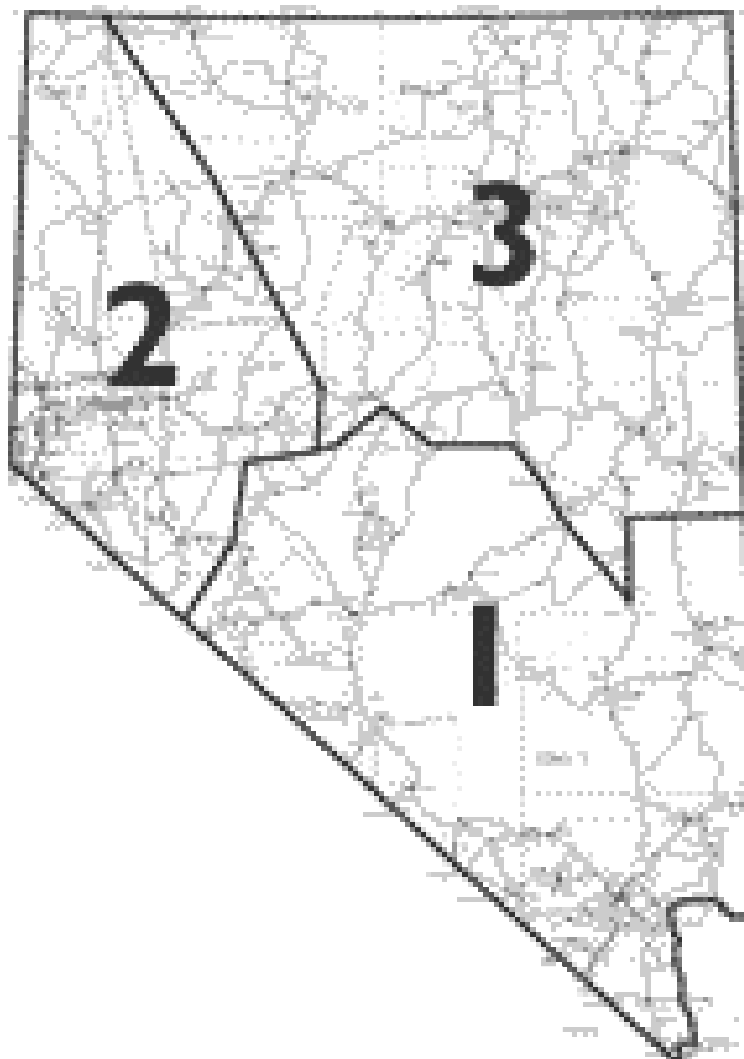
Attachment B. Maps

California



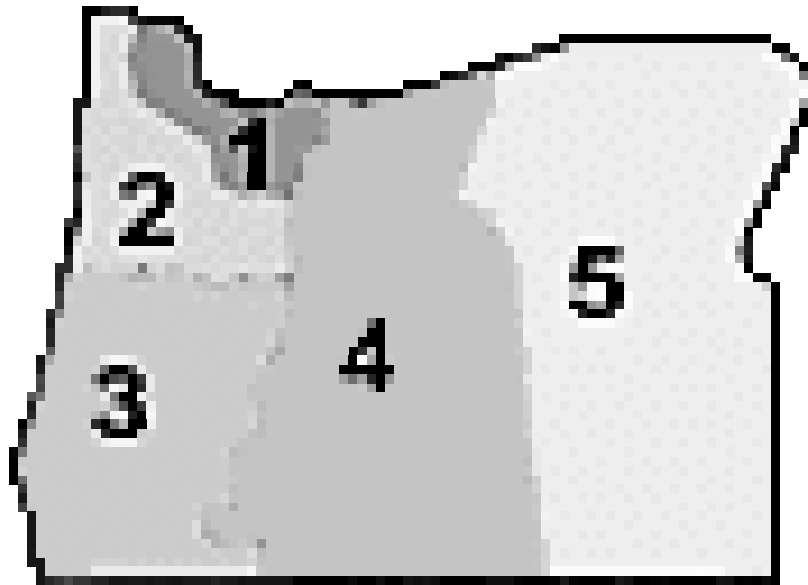
Nevada

DOT districts



Oregon

DOT districts



Washington

DOT districts



Regional transportation planning organizations

